

*ON CREATION OF A SEPARATE KARNATAK PROVINCE

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Bombay City, Byculla and Parel): Sir, I am entirely in agreement with what has been stated by my honourable friend Sir Ali Mahomed Khan Dehlavi and I think the view that you have come to on this point, if I may say so with respect, is correct. I should like to draw your attention to Rule 22, sub-rule (2), which reads :—

“The Speaker may disallow any Resolution or part of a Resolution on the ground that it relates to a matter which is not primarily the concern of the Provincial Government, and if he does so, the resolution or part of the resolution shall not be placed on the list of business.”

I submit, therefore, that this resolution deals with a problem which is not primarily the concern of this provincial Government in so far as it recommends that certain areas which are now a part of the Madras Presidency shall be separated, which I submit is beyond the jurisdiction of a Provincial Government. But, Sir, coming to section 290, to which reference has been made by my honourable friend Mr. Jog, I should like to draw your attention to the fact that that section 290 of the present Government of India Act is analogous to section 52A of the Government of India Act of 1919. Comparing section 52A of the Government of India Act, 1919, with section 290, one finds a very radical and a very deliberate change made. Under the old Act, section 52A laid down that if any new Province was to be created, it was permissible for the local Legislature to pass a resolution to that effect and to communicate it to the Governor-General, because, Sir, as you will recall, under the old Act of 1919, the authority to create new Provinces was vested in the Governor-General, and before the Governor-General could take any initiative under section 52A, it was open to the Provincial Legislature to pass resolutions conveying their sentiments on this matter. Section 290, as I stated, involves a deliberate change. It takes away the power from the Governor-General of constituting new Provinces from the old. It gives the power to the Secretary of State, practically to His Majesty in Council Secondly, it takes away the power of initiative from the local Legislature. The power of initiation, as I see under section 290, is given to

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the Secretary of State. After the Secretary of State decides to constitute new Provinces, then before tabling an Order in Council to that effect, he is required, an obligation is imposed upon him by section 290, to consult the Legislatures affected by the order. It is then only that it would be permissible for any Provincial Legislature to discuss a resolution of that sort, notwithstanding the fact that the resolution affected areas which were not included within the Province. If this resolution was referred by the Secretary of State to this House, I submit then and then only it would be permissible for this Legislature to consider whether Karnatak should be separated and certain areas which are not part and parcel of this Province should be incorporated in it or not. Unless that step has taken place, unless the matter has been approached by the Secretary of State, I submit this Provincial Government, the Provincial Legislature cannot deal with a resolution which evidently deals with a problem which is beyond the scope and authority of this Legislature and beyond the scope and authority of this Provincial Government I submit therefore that the view which you have taken is a perfectly proper view both under the rules and also under section 290 of the Government of India Act.

The Honourable the Speaker: I would like to have one point made clear. I dropped the suggestion so far as the inclusion of the words "Madras and Coorg" are concerned. The argument advanced by the honourable member Dr. Ambedkar seems to go further and says that any resolution dealing with the creation of any new Province or changing the boundaries of any Province cannot be taken up at all in any Provincial Legislature, because the Legislature has not got the power to take the initiative in that respect. That is what I understand the argument comes to.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Yes, Sir.

The Honourable the Speaker: His point of order then really makes no difference between the inclusion of Madras and Coorg. If nothing can be discussed, then the inclusion of Madras or Coorg makes no difference. His point goes to the very root of it. There is one difficulty in that connection : the power of initiation is given under certain limitations or rather it is to be exercised under certain limitations. But a Legislature expresses its opinion with a view to move the Government which has got the power to initiate proceedings. Is there anything in section 290 which debar a Legislature from making a request for taking the initiative ? It is not that this Legislature by its resolution or its action is going to initiate proceedings in the sense of an actual separation. If the word "initiative" is used, in another sense, it will initiate by making a request. But is it debarred even from making a representation under the terms of section 290 ? On that point, I am afraid I am not inclined to agree with the learned Doctor.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: I take exactly the same view, that this House is debarred. The fact that explicitly or expressly the power to take the initiative has been given to the Secretary of State in itself would show that the initiation has been taken out from the Legislature, and I say, comparing

section 52A of the old Act with section 290 of the present Act, the situation seems to be absolutely clear. This fact was considered at the time by the Simon Commission and by the Round Table Conference, and they came to the conclusion that the only Provinces which satisfied the conditions for separation were Orissa, Sind and North-West Frontier Province. They did not leave the initiative to the Provincial Legislature.

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†*Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Bombay City)*: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to oppose the resolution moved by my honourable friend Mr. Jog. The subject of this resolution is undoubtedly a matter of great moment. I wonder how many members of this House will be prepared to consider this resolution, without importing into the discussion any sentiment or feeling. I think I, as representing the Scheduled Classes, probably have an advantage over other members of the House. If I may say so, I do not say figuratively but as a matter of most genuine feeling, that we representing the Scheduled Castes take no pride either in being Maharashtrians or Gujaratis or Karnatakis. For reasons which I need not enter into on this particular occasion, there are very many reasons why we think that this is not our land. However, I am using the argument in order to show to the House that by circumstances, I am capable of taking a dispassionate view, at any rate I am making a very serious attempt to take a dispassionate view, of the situation that has been presented to us by this resolution. Sir, it would be necessary and desirable for members of this House to bear in mind one fact which I think is of supreme importance. This Presidency of Bombay was, before the Act came into operation, composed of four different units—Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnatak and Sind. This joint family has not been of recent origin. Karnatak, Maharashtra and Gujarat have been together for the last 115 years. Sind was with us for nearly 90 years. Sind has been separated. It is a matter past which we need not dig up now. I mention this fact that we have been living together for the last 115 years only to emphasise the fact that those who want that this unity be sundered, that these three parts which are together be now separated, must consider this matter in a much more serious way and not on grounds which are purely sentimental.

The first thing I propose to consider is this. Our friend who has moved this resolution has given expression to the view that the proposition is only a part of the larger whole, the ideal being the unification of all Karnatak people, that this resolution is merely a step in that direction. Now, Sir, the question that I would like to ask on this aspect is this. Is it likely that this ideal, if my honourable friends will allow me to say this dream, could be realised, the ideal of all the Kanarese speaking people coming together? I have no doubt that this is a dream which can never come true, and the reason for my saying so is this. In a book which has been circulated, at

†B.L.A. Debates, Vol. 3, pp. 1717-23, dated 4th April 1938.

any rate I have been fortunate in securing a copy of it, and which is called "A case for the unification of Karnatak"—I take it that it is a publication of the association which is responsible for this move—I find a statement on page 22 from which it is quite clear that a portion of the Kanarese-speaking people are included within the boundaries of Indian States. Having regard to this fact, the question I would like to ask my honourable friends who are supporting this motion is this : Is it possible to get out from the jurisdiction and sovereignty of the Indian States the Kanarese-speaking people so that they can become part of the autonomous Kanarese-speaking Province ? I agree and grant that it is possible for the authorities who are responsible for the administration of British India to persuade the Madras Presidency or other administrations which are subject to British law to part with such territories which consist of Kanarese-speaking people, so that all of them will be consolidated together under one common administration. But I fail to understand how it would be possible for any body to get Kanarese-speaking people who are now living in Indian States, as it is, to have their allegiance transferred from the States to any British Indian Province. The only conceivable situation in which I think that issue can be successfully thought out would be the transfer of some territory from British India to the Indian States in exchange for the territory occupied by the Kanarese-speaking people. Now, I wonder whether any body of people who are living under the constitution given by the Government of India Act would be prepared to go within the jurisdiction of the Indian States, so that the Indian States may agree to transfer the Kanarese-speaking people from their domain ? I see no prospect and, therefore, I ask those of the honourable members who are in charge of this resolution to consider if my submission is correct, namely, that it would be only possible for them to fully realise their ideal, namely, to have all the Kanarese-speaking people included in one common autonomous Government : Is it worth-while for them to separate a few Kanarese-speaking people occupying a few districts in British India and constitute it into an autonomous Province ? If I may say so what is the use of taking a step, if we know before hand that the step is not going to lead to the ultimate goal ?

Therefore, I will now turn to the second consideration. If it is not possible to realise the ideal of unifying all the Kanarese-speaking people by bringing them under one common autonomous rule, the question that arises in my judgment is this : Has there been any handicap, has there been any difficulty. in the matter of Kanarese-speaking people recouping or having all the advantages which justice can give them in this what I may call, the polyglot administration ? I personally do not see that the Kanarese-speaking people are suffering any handicap in the matter of administration in this polyglot province.

Now, Sir, I have examined this question from two different points of view. First of all, I take the question of the distribution of offices under the new Government. Have they suffered in that way ? Have they obtained less than what was due to them ? The second thing that I take by way of test is this : Have they obtained less representation in this House than what they are

entitled to ? Now, Sir, I take these figures, and, in taking these figures, I am leaving out of consideration composite territories, such as, for instance, the City of Bombay, which is really neither wholly Marathi-speaking nor wholly Gujarati, nor wholly Kanarese. I am leaving such areas aside; I am also leaving out of consideration the seats that are assigned to special interests, and I find these figures. So far as population is concerned, the Marathi-speaking population numbers 9,868,795—in Marathi-speaking, of course I include everybody, Hindus, Mussalmans and Scheduled Castes ; I am only taking the linguistic basis—the Gujarati-speaking population number, 3,422,139 ; and the Kanarese-speaking people number 3,266,223. Now, the position regarding seats in this House is this. On a purely population basis, taking that the 81 seats which have gone to the Marathi-speaking people as the standard, as the norm, by which to judge, I find that the Gujarati-speaking people should have got 27 seats. The Kanarese-speaking population, according to the book that is circulated, is 12 per cent. of the total, and on that basis, they were entitled to 21 seats. How many seats have been obtained by them in fact ? The Gujarati-speaking people have obtained 31 seats, when, as a matter of fact, they were entitled only to 27 seats. The Kanarese-speaking people have received 28 seats, when, as a matter of fact, they were entitled only to 21.

Now, coming to the offices. Taking the two Houses together there are 16 places. Now, on the basis of the ideal number of seats which each section was entitled to on the basis of its actual population, the Marathi-speaking people were entitled to 196, the Gujarati-speaking people were entitled to 3.3, and the Kanarese-speaking people were entitled to 3.1. Taking the distribution of offices on the basis of the actual number of seats obtained, irrespective of the question whether that was the right quota or not, the Marathi-speaking people's quota was 9.3, the Gujarati-speaking people's quota was 3.6, and the quota of the Kanarese-speaking people was 3.1. As a matter of fact, what has been the distribution of offices ? Six have gone to the Marathi-speaking people; 6 have gone to the Gujarati-speaking people. and 4 have gone to the Kanarese-speaking people.

Sir, as I said, I take no pride in being a Maharashtrian, but the fact remains—and when I use it, I do want to caution the House that I am not citing it by way of complaint, that is not my object; I am citing it merely to point out a fact—the fact remains that the minority people, namely, the Gujarati-speaking and the Kanarese-speaking people, have not been done any injustice either in the matter of seats or in the matter of offices. Before this matter was discussed in this House, I told my honourable friend Mr. Jog quite plainly that if he proved to my knowledge and to my conviction that the Karnatak people suffered in any way—either they did not receive adequate and just representation in this House or that they did not receive sufficient representation in the Cabinet—they could always depend upon my support. I am always prepared to do this. But, Sir, taking these figures—I have devoted the greatest care to the study of this subject; these are figures

quoted from official data—speaking for myself at any rate, I do not see that the Karnatak people have suffered in any way by their remaining within the presidency of Bombay.

Now, Sir, coming to the other argument, the question, which, I think is important, and which not only I on this side but those friends who are responsible for this resolution are bound to consider, is the financial question. Is it possible for this newly constituted Kanarese-speaking province to maintain financially the standard of expenditure which is accepted in modern times by every civilized Government? That, I think, is a very important question. Friends on the other side who have spoken in support of the resolution have drawn the attention of the House to a complaint that in the past Karnatak has suffered enormously by negligence on the part of the Government of this province.

The Honourable the Speaker: I would only just invite the attention of the honourable member to the time-limit

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: If you, Sir, ask me

The Honourable the Speaker: I do not like to interrupt the honourable member in the middle of an argument, but I would only remind him of the time limit for speeches, so that he might put forward his arguments in a nutshell.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: With regard to this question of finance, what I should like to say is this. In the book which has been circulated, we have been given certain figures. In Appendix B we are told that the total expenditure of the new Kanarese-speaking province would be about 2 crores, and the total revenue would be 2,57 lakhs. Now, I do not know how far the figures given in this appendix include what are called the overhead expenses of carrying on the administration of a province. What I find here are merely sums under certain heads of revenue and expenditure. I do not find anywhere here the expenditure that would be necessary to be incurred on paying a salary to a Governor; to his private staff; to the Secretaries; to the Ministers, to a Director of Public Instruction, who would be necessary; to an Inspector-General of Police; to a health officer—all those superior officers who are necessary for keeping the administration on the run.

Mr. V. N. Jog: You will find these figures in Appendix B in the other book.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: May be But, Sir, assuming now for a moment that this is going to be the budget, and as framed here there is to be a surplus of some 5 or odd lakhs, the question that I would like to ask is this: Is this revenue going to be sufficient for providing all that a modern administration must provide? If my honourable friend were to acquaint himself as to what the revenue of the Bombay Municipality is, he will find that the revenue of the new Province will not be even half the revenue of the Bombay Municipality. The revenue of the Bombay Municipality is Rs. 4 crores, and even with the 4 crores the Bombay Municipality is not able to do all that a modern Government should. I really ask—and I am very serious

in saying this—whether this is no consideration which ought to prevail. My learned friend has quoted in the course of this debate a speech delivered by the Prime Minister of Orissa where he has stated that he was very glad that all the limbs have been brought together. I wonder what my honourable friend would say if I stated to him that it is not quite so important to bring limbs together as to provide food for them. This is a question which has to be considered. Sir, I do say and I say that with, all the emphasis, it is a most heart-rendering thing in this country to see these people cut up into small bodies with revenue no more than that of an ordinary local board. The separation of the Province might satisfy the ambitions of a few people who want to figure as the heads of the Province but what about the rest of the population who need to be fed, who need to be clothed, who need to be housed? None of us can tolerate this kind of thing. I do say that with all emphasis. Sir, after all, what are these districts? Two of these districts are famine-stricken. The whole of Bijapur is a famine-stricken district. The whole of Bellary also I am told is famine-stricken. What revenue does he expect to get from the famine-stricken area? Merely by separating from the Bombay Presidency is that going to be a milch cow?

Then there is another question to which I advert and it is this: I being a member of a minority, I am bound to consider these things from the standpoint of the minority. I am very glad that several members who spoke in favour of the resolution did give us an assurance that the interests of the Muhammadans and the interests of the Harijans will be looked after. But I do want to say this, that along with dismemberment of these Provincial areas there is going to be a dismemberment of the minorities. I cannot forget the fact that in the Karnatak we have only two seats. I am sure that those members of the Scheduled Classes who come from the Karnatak must be feeling that their strength lies in the fact that there are 13 members from other parts of the Presidency to look after them. What is to happen to them? I am sure, for instance, the Muhammadan community has got about 8 seats from the Karnatak.

Sir Ali Mahomed Khan Dehlavi: Only four.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar: Very well. I won't argue as I am rather pressed for time. But we cannot allow this kind of dismemberment. It is very good for the members of the majority community to say that they will be generous and they will be kind. We cannot depend upon their generosity and upon their kindness. We want rights and rights cannot be given in a generous way. To a community which after all on a purely population basis forms only a microscopic minority, even supposing they were prepared to give weightage, what weightage could they give to a population which is about a few lakhs? This is one of the points on which I oppose this resolution. This dismemberment I am not prepared to accept. Our strength lies in a polyglot administration. I do not want to say, but I have my fears that if Karnatak is created as a separate Province, it would be a Province of all the Lingayats against everybody else. I am not mincing matters, but if, for instance, there

was separation there would be a combination of the Marathas against the Kanarese, we don't want this kind of thing—and there cannot be a common front which we at present enjoy.

Then there is one other thing I would like to draw the attention of the House to—and with this I want to close—and that is I know there are people probably who would not agree with me but that is my conviction that the British, whatever they may have done in the course of history, whatever they may have failed to do—and there are many things which they have failed to do, which their self-interest probably did not permit them to do—have done two things which I am generous enough to admit as being two monuments of their rule in this country which will survive even when they go away. The one thing that they have done for us is a common code of law. You can travel from Kashmir down to South India and know that murder is the same thing whether you commit it in Kashmir, Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province, or whether you commit it in Rajah-mundry in Madras. You know what Transfer of Property means ; you know what evidence means wherever you go. Sir, I say such a thing we did not have. The other thing that the British have done is that they have given us a common Central Government Such a thing we did not have before. The importance of this fact of having a common Central Government is not probably realised by all But I think it is a very crucial fact If today we are on the way of building a common nation, a spirit of nationality, a feeling that we are all one, it is due to the fact that we have a common Government ; it is due to the fact that we realise that we are citizens of a common Government.

Sir, I would plead with the members of this House that they should do nothing whereby they would impair these two advantages which we have secured. Personally myself I say openly that I do not believe that there is any place in this country for any particular culture, whether it is Hindu culture, or a Muhammadan culture, or a Kanarese culture or a Gujarati culture. There are things we cannot deny, but they are not to be cultivated as advantages, they are to be treated as disadvantages as something which divides our loyalty and takes away from us our common goal. That common goal is the building up of a feeling that We are all Indians. I do not like what some people say, that we are Indians first and Hindus afterwards or Muslims afterwards. I am not satisfied with that, I frankly say that I am not satisfied with that. I do not want that our loyalty as Indians should be in the slightest way affected by any competitive loyalty whether that loyalty arises out of our religion, out of our culture or out of our language. I want all people to be Indian first, Indian last and nothing else but Indians and therefore, I say, that this is a resolution which directly runs counter to this ideal. Sir, this is an ideal which we ought to cherish very zealously. I can quite understand that in a country like America, in a country like Germany, in a country like Europe, where the feeling of oneness is solidified, where there is no need to make anybody feel that he is not

a German to tolerate anything that is of a separatistic character, but where the feeling that we are Indians is still in its embryo, is only beginning to ripen, to allow other loyalties, feeling of culture, feelings of nationality to grow simultaneously—I say deliberately—is the greatest crime that we can commit and I, for myself, will not be a party to it and I strongly, very strongly, oppose this resolution. (Applause.)

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